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Summary and Keywords

Vernacular literacy began in Finland with the Reformation. Michael Agricola, the first Finnish reformer, studied in Wittenberg, and, after returning to Finland, translated the first books into Finnish. The books were originally intended for priests, but in the middle of the 17th century a literacy campaign was conducted throughout the Swedish realm, one that was quite effective in expanding the reading audience. A number of bishops in the diocese of Turku were also active in writing basic religious material for the common people, including primers, catechisms, and hymnals. The church also examined its parishioners' reading skills. People could not acquire the status of godparent, attend the Eucharist, or marry without proper reading skills and a knowledge of basic Christian doctrine. In the first phase of the campaign, reading was only learning by rote, but by the last decades of the 17th century bishops and priests were emphasizing the importance of reading from books and understanding their content. Literacy progressed further in the 18th century, and literature published in Finnish became more varied.

During the 19th century, Finland's literacy rate continued to rise gradually. For the vast majority of the rural population, however, "literacy" meant only the very basic reading skills required and examined by the Lutheran Church. The statute for primary schools was laid down in 1866, but the law on compulsory primary education was not enacted until 1921. The Russian government began to promote the Finnish language in the 1860s. The consequent growth of Finnish-language literature and the expansion of the press allowed for reading by large segments of the population. The popular movements established during the final decades of the 19th century (the temperance movement, agrarian youth movement, and labor movement, for example) provided further opportunities for literary training. Among the lower classes in rural Finland, many self-educated writers submitted manuscripts to the Finnish Literature Society and sent news of their home parishes to newspapers. Some of them became professional writers or journalists.

Keywords: literacy, book culture, reading skills, writing skills, reformation, nationalism, newspapers, autobiographies, local libraries

Finnish Literacy

Finnish book culture has many special features that are related to Finland's history as a remote borderland between Russia and Scandinavia. Finnish is a Finno-Ugric language and not Indo-European; its syntax, grammar, and vocabulary are completely different from those of the Scandinavian languages. The country does have close historical connections with Scandinavia, however.

Finland became part of the Kingdom of Sweden in the 12th and 13th centuries following the Northern Crusades, during which its pagan tribes were converted to Roman Catholicism, and Swedish-speaking people settled in the coastal regions.[1] In the 16th century, a literary culture had already been established in Turku and Viipuri due to the presence of the church and its cathedral schools. Beyond, the literacy rate remained very low, particularly in more remote areas of the north and east.

Swedish became the administrative and educational language of Finland in the 16th century when Sweden occupied large areas around the Baltic Sea. However, the peasantry and lower clergy used Finnish for these purposes especially in the Finnish-speaking areas. This explains some of the differences between literacy rates and literacy practices in Sweden and Finland. In Sweden, book readership among the lower classes was much wider than in Finland in the 18th century.[2]

Finland and the other Nordic countries share some distinctive features in their literacy and book culture history; these are related to the historical, cultural, and religious development of the Nordic region. In both the Finnish and Swedish languages, no single word exists for "literacy." Rather, reading and writing skills have two separate terms: in Finnish, "lukutaito," for reading skills and "kirjoitustaito," for writing skills; the corresponding terms in Swedish are "läskunnnighet" and "skrivkunnighet." Earlier in the Nordic countries, reading and writing were separate skills: since the 16th century, reading skills were, in principle, required of all the population, and the Lutheran Church bore the responsibility for this basic reading instruction. Not until the primary school system was introduced in the 19th century could more than a small part of the adult population write, however.[3]

Geographical and Cultural Basis

The position of Finland between Sweden and Russia, the West and the East, has not been only geographical, but cultural as well. Until 1721, the whole of Finland was an eastern part of the Swedish realm, but in the peace treaties of Uusikaupunki (1721) and Turku (1742) eastern parts of Finland, Karelia, were annexed by Russia. This area is called “Old Finland.” The rest of the country as well as the northeastern part, Savolax, remained in Sweden until 1809, when they were also annexed by Russia as its grand duchy. Old Finland entered the grand duchy three years later, in 1812.

Western and eastern parts of Finland had different cultures and mentalities even before the Great Northern war (1700–1721), but the war exaggerated the discrepancies. Eastern parts of the realm, which were poorer than western parts, had been a battleground between the sides, with war furthering destruction. With few roads, areas were sparsely populated. All the bigger cities with the exception of Viipuri were in western Finland. Roughly speaking, the western part of Finland was directed toward Sweden and the eastern part toward Russia. So too in book culture: for instance, Old Finland maintained contacts both to St. Petersburg and Tallinn, where Finnish books were printed. In western Finland, book production and book trade were brisker and the reading skills better than in eastern Finland, where a rich oral culture was better preserved. In western Finland, people were capable of reading Swedish books transferred from the mother country, because on the western coast there was a dense Swedish-speaking settlement. As a whole, Finland was, in effect, the eastern part of Sweden, but at the same time it was not culturally uniform.

The Beginning of Literacy Among the Common People

In the Middle Ages, book culture in Finland was, as in many other countries, in the hands of the upper classes. The common people could not read nor write, but they would not have had vernacular books anyway—books were printed in Latin, as was the Mass, which people were supposed to attend regularly. However, the sermons were held in Finnish, and the most important prayers had been translated into vernacular language.

The first steps toward common people’s literacy in Finland were taken after the Reformation. One of the Reformation’s main goals was for people to be able to read the Bible for themselves. In Lutheran areas, this meant reading the catechism and Christian doctrine. The German reformer Martin Luther had published both a Smaller Catechism (1529) for common people and a Larger Catechism (1529) for priests. The smaller version was soon translated into many languages and was widely used throughout the Lutheran world. Some basic religious vernacular texts, at least the prayer Our Father, Ave Maria, and the confession of faith had been translated into Finnish even before the Reformation. They had been written on pieces of paper and have not been preserved. The first preserved manuscript texts in Finnish are from the 1530s—liturgical texts translated

from Swedish. In the 1540s and 1550s, Finnish reformer Michael Agricola translated the first printed religious books into Finnish: the primer (*Abc-kiria*), New Testament (*Se Wsi testamenti*), prayer book (*Rucouskiria Bibliasta*), and some parts of the Old Testament. These were primarily intended for priests. However, even the primer continuously repeated the words of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed, for example, to make them easier for readers to comprehend.[4]

After the Reformation, there were two dioceses in Finland. The western diocese began in the 13th century with Turku as its capital. The eastern diocese of Viipuri was founded in 1554. The bishops of the Turku and Viipuri dioceses were eager to publish religious books for the people. During the two first decades of the 17th century, Bishop Ericus Erici Sorolainen of Turku published both a smaller and larger catechism, the latter written for priests, as well as the first collection of sermons (Postilla) in Finnish, which helped priests in their work. At that time, people were already being taught to read the catechism by themselves although they mostly learned it by rote at the beginning of the process. At least some of them owned their own catechisms. Ericus Erici stated in the preface of his sermon collection that people had learned to read the ABC books and catechisms distributed among them. There were no parish schools for the common people as there were, for example, in Denmark. According to the Church Law of 1686, the masters of the households were responsible for the instruction of household members. This meant in practice that parents had to teach their children to read, but if they were not able to do that because of their own illiteracy, they received help from parishes.[5]

Ericus Erici and his Viipuri diocese colleague Olaus Elimaeus each published a manual containing all liturgical parts of the service and the sacraments. Compared with Ericus Erici's manual, Olaus Elimaeus's manual retained more of the 1614 Swedish manual and included more Reformation features in its texts. Olaus Elimaeus explains this as a result of the Reformation being already more familiar to the people at that time (1629) than when Ericus Erici's manual was published (1614).[6]

The first hymnals in Finnish were printed in 1583 (collected by Jacobus Petri Finno, rector of the Turku Cathedral School). In 1605, Hemming, the vicar of Masku parish in Southwest Finland, published a hymnal in Stockholm, and only two years later a Finnish hymnal was published in Rostock by a priest in Viipuri, Simon Johannis Carelius. He also undertook the first Finnish translation of Luther's smaller catechism. The Finnish texts were usually printed in western dialect, which gradually became the basis for the official Finnish language. In the books written for the eastern (Viipuri) diocese, the eastern, Karelian dialect (or at least features of it) was used. Both dialects were understandable by all the people, so there were few differences between the books. Often books printed for western or eastern Finland were used in both areas, because of the small amount of religious literature published for the common people at the beginning of the 17th century. Literacy was still quite poor, and what they knew was based on learning by rote, which is why many did not own a single book. Nonetheless, publications in the vernacular were

highly valued. They provided a strong basis for examining and teaching Christian doctrine, and paved the way for more active reading and learning in the future.[7]

The most influential campaign for literacy among common people took place in the final decades of the 17th century. The bishop of Turku, Johannes Gezelius the Elder, was very interested in education. He wrote several books for this purpose: a catechism, a new translation of the Bible in 1683–1685 (the first translation of the whole Bible had been published in 1642), a hymnal in 1700 (later developed into the "Old Finnish hymnal" [1701] and used until 1886), and different instructions for arranging the education of the people. From his own press, founded in 1669, he also printed many texts and schoolbooks to educate priests. Gezelius was a devotee of Johann Amos Comenius's pedagogy and used the practices of Comenius in his own works in order to achieve better results in education. For example, his catechism *Yxi lasten paras tawara* [The Best Book for Children, printed in 1666] consisted of four parts (primer, catechism, deeper questions on Christianity, and phrases from the Bible) which were to be learned one after another—knowing the previous part allowed one to continue to the next, slightly more difficult, part. This catechism was printed in more than sixty Finnish and about ten Swedish editions until 1809. During Gezelius's lifetime people were still memorizing the catechism by rote, but the bishop emphasized the significance of reading from a book, because for him, understanding was important when learning about Christianity.[8]

In the Swedish realm the reading of the catechism was important for the common people in many ways. According to the Church Law of 1686, it was a condition for being able to marry, act as a godparent, and attend the Eucharist. It was the parents' duty to teach their children to read. The priests' task was not to teach reading but to examine literacy skills. In the cities, this was done on Saturday evenings for those wanting to attend the Eucharist on Sunday morning, in the countryside, just before the Sunday service, and in some villages during annual parish catechetical meetings. Knowledge of the catechism was tested as well as ability to read. One's skills were recorded in examination registers by the priests. These examinations could be intimidating occasions, particularly for those who were not good readers. Some people avoided them by being absent or otherwise hiding on the day of the examination. This was more common in eastern Finland, but also happened in the west.[9]

Although each priest had his own way of recording people's reading skills, these examination records are the best source to research literacy in Finland from the 17th to the 19th century. The records were composed of forms to fill in by marking with X's. Forms had several questions about learning by rote or from the book, knowing different parts of catechism, and the Table of Duties. These records show that reading skills in the 17th and even 18th century varied from region to region. In western areas of Finland, especially Ostrobothnia, the level of skills was high. People not only read the catechism but understood its content. By the middle of the 18th century, all church requirements concerning reading were fulfilled. People in this area knew all six paragraphs of the catechism, could read from it, and knew its Table of Duties as well (this was the most difficult part, where the duties of the various estates were explained). In North Karelia,

however, less than 60 percent of the population was literate, but literacy became more widespread at the end of the century. The skills of commoners in the eastern Savolax region were even less developed; for example, at the end of the 18th century, people could learn to read the catechism both by heart and from the book, but they knew nothing about the Table of Duties.[10] Savolax and Ostrobothnia represent the extremes in both literacy and knowledge of Christian texts at that time.[11]

An interesting case was the part of South Karelia that was ceded to Russia by the Turku peace treaty of 1742 (so-called Old Finland). In its major center, Willmanstrand, people could read quite well during the 18th century. They were not very keen on it, however. They read what they were supposed to and bought hymnals and even some devotional books, which can be seen in their estate inventory deeds, but reading was not very important in this territory as compared with Ostrobothnia, where people read eagerly, bought books, and even translated them if no Finnish versions were available. In eastern Finland the acquisition of books was more difficult than in western parts, but books could be purchased. People there did not have difficulties in reading the texts ordered for them, but they did not seem to work to improve their skills or acquire extra books.[12]

Book Recommendations and the Most Popular Books of the Commoners

The first printing press in Finland was set up in 1642 by the Turku Academy, founded two years earlier. Before then, all books were printed in Sweden (Stockholm, Uppsala), and sometimes Germany. The new academy needed a printing press to publish dissertations and other academic material, and the press proved very useful for the educational work of the church as well. When Johannes Gezelius the Elder became bishop of Turku, he founded his own printing press as well as a small bookshop in conjunction with it. The shop’s clients were mostly schoolteachers and priests, who bought large numbers of books to distribute in their schools and parishes. There was also a printing press in Viipuri from 1689 to 1710. It closed following Russian occupation and disappeared during the war. With the establishment of the Vaasa Court of Appeal in 1776, a printing press was founded in the city of Vaasa, printing documents for the court but religious books as well. At the time of the Great Northern War, Gezelius’s printing press was sold to Henrik Christoffer Merckell, who moved it to Stockholm. The Turku Academy printing press and its counterpart in Vaasa continued to operate after Finland became a Russian grand duchy in 1809.[13]

Gezelius had stated in his school order *Methodus informandi* that those who could afford it should acquire devotional books to better their literacy skills and knowledge of Christianity. The Turku and Porvoo chapters of Finnish dioceses distributed circulars containing book recommendations in the 18th century. Especially after the Great Northern War (1700–1721), many churches were burglarized, which led to an alarming

shortage of common religious literature. Translation and publication projects were organized by the dioceses to improve literacy in the parishes, particularly in eastern Finland. Catechisms and other short religious books were freely distributed to prisoners and indigent persons. During the 19th century it was common practice in many parishes to give a New Testament or hymnal to young people after their first communion.[14]

The most popular book among the common people was the hymnal, which became general reading as literacy improved. These 18th-century Finnish hymnals contained not only hymns but also the catechism, prayer book, liturgical texts, and often even the service book. It was possible to find several hymnals in the same family, as women and men did not sit together in church and usually brought their own hymnals with them to services. Women kept their hymnals at home in baskets with their better clothes, resulting in many of the books being catalogued in the estate inventory deeds alongside articles of clothing.[15]

The catechism was a very common book as well because of the catechism examinations. Although the catechism was usually contained in the hymnal, many people acquired it separately. The most common catechism in the hymnal was Luther’s, but examinations were based principally on other catechisms: at first Ericus Erici’s, then Gezelius’s, and, beginning in the mid-18th century, Bishop Olaus Svebilius’s. Svebilius’s catechism had become official throughout the Swedish realm soon after its first edition in 1689, but it was not translated into Finnish until 1746. At the end of the 18th century, many new catechisms were being published because people had become dissatisfied with Svebilius’s version. Many learned people thought that Svebilius was too complicated. Bishop of Visby Johan Möller’s catechism in particular grew very popular in Finland at that time; the Finnish translation was printed in 1793 and eight editions were published until 1853. Möller, for whom clarity and simple language were important, wrote three catechisms at different levels: one for the youngest children, a second for those who could already read and needed more information on Christianity, and a third more challenging version with lots of details on Christianity. The middle one was translated into Finnish.[16] This pedagogical touch of Möller perhaps caused his popularity in Finland during the 19th century.

The Swedish Law of 1724 made drawing up a deed of inventory compulsory for every estate. In the 18th century and even at the beginning of the 19th century, it was very common to catalogue all the estate’s goods on the inventory deed. All the books were catalogued, usually including their titles, although the titles were typically written down quite vaguely. This is a rather good source for researching book ownership in Finland in the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century. Although the system was compulsory, estate inventory deeds were not always made. Those estates that did not draw up a deed of inventory were usually poor and likely did not contain any books.[17]

The preserved inventory deeds of common people show that they also owned devotional literature in the 18th century, particularly in western Finland. The most popular titles were works by the German orthodox and pietist writers Johann Gerhard, Johann Arndt,

Johann Philipp Fresenius, and August Hermann Francke. From English devotional literature, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Arthur Dent's *A Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven*, both translated into Finnish, were the most popular. Devotional literature in Finland was derived from German, Swedish, Danish, or English texts, and read among the common people naturally in Finnish or to some extent in Swedish in the Swedish-speaking areas of the country. The full Bible was rarely seen in commoners' homes even in the 18th century, although it became more common toward the century's end. Commoners came to own the New Testament from 1732 onward with the publication of the new edition. The New Testament did not come into general use until the first decades of the 19th century, when the Finnish Bible Society began publishing and distributing it.[18]

Expanding Book Culture in the Closing Decades of the 18th Century

The first secular books among the common people were almanacs. The first of these in Finland (the eastern part of the Swedish realm) were printed in Swedish at the beginning of the 17th century; Finnish almanacs followed a hundred years later. The influence of the Enlightenment is seen in the publication of these useful texts for the common people. The books covered such topics as medicines, agricultural techniques, and educating children; some information was published in the form of attachments to almanacs. With the expansion of writing ability (albeit slowly due to the church's focus on reading and not writing), people started to use almanacs as notebooks, making entries particularly on family life and the weather. This practice became more widespread in the 19th century. The 18th century is better known as a time for travel books and novels, which were owned and read mostly by the upper classes in Swedish, German, French, and, rarely, English. In the lives of the common people, the most popular and widely read publications were broadsheets featuring sensational and unbelievable events. Broadsheets in the 17th century contained hymns, but in the following century included more secular themes like love songs. Broadsheet texts were sung aloud in the marketplace in order to sell them. People often learned them by rote, and this, as well as memorizing the catechism, helped in reading the same texts from books, as they were already familiar.[19]

In the 18th century, especially in Ostrobothnia and Southwest Finland, a number of common people (mostly farmers and craftsmen) had learned to write as well as read. They translated books and wrote some texts by themselves. One such self-taught man was Tuomas Ragvaldinpoika (Thomas Ragvalds's son), from Tyrvää in the district of Satakunta. Physically handicapped, he could not do manual labor and perhaps for that reason turned to the literary domain. He taught children, and published several broadsheets as well as congratulatory texts for marriage and condolence texts for funerals. In 1761, he sought permission to publish a new edition of the "learned men sermons," which had been printed a hundred years earlier. This was denied by the

Chapter of Turku diocese because Tuomas Ragvaldinpoika was considered an unlearned man without a theological education. Commoners were not allowed to even republish theological texts.[20]

One of the most touching of Tuomas Ragvaldinpoika's texts, a poem, tells about the surgery on his harelip. At that time, surgery was quite rare, painful, and frightening. Tuomas Ragvaldinpoika describes it in detail in his broadsheet, comparing his own suffering with that of Christ on the cross. The poem has many similarities with suffering psalms and hymns, which were surely known to this literate man.[21]

The late 18th and early 19th century witnessed an interesting phenomenon in Ostrobothnia. Several craftsmen began to translate or copy different religious texts and distribute them in the region, a practice linked to the high literary skills of the people and a local shortage of religious texts. The translated texts were not all religious—some were textbooks, for example—and not all were doctrinally accepted by the church. Many were translations of spiritual mystics (Jacob Böhme, Thomas Bromley, and John Pordage) never before printed in Finnish or even Swedish. This movement is known as the "Mystics of Ostrobothnia." The translators and copyists valued books and often tried to imitate them in letters and typography; the books were the only model of writing for the self-taught in these regions. Some locals to this day have been quite unwilling to talk about the "Mystics of Ostrobothnia" movement because of its illegality. The Finnish Literature Society and National Library of Finland preserve good collections of the associated translations and copies.[22]

The National Awakening and the Rise of the Finnish Language and Culture

Finland's long-lasting ties with Sweden were broken in 1809 when Finland was annexed to Russia as an autonomous grand duchy. During the first half of the 19th century, the Russian government took an ambivalent stance toward the rise of Finnish language and culture. On the one hand, Russian officials supported the Finnish language because they wanted to distance Finland from Sweden. On the other, the spread of European nationalistic ideologies was seen as a threat, and student activity in particular was tightly controlled. The provincial student societies were banned between 1852 and 1868, and the language statute of 1852 ended students' attempts to publish popular books in Finnish. The statute permitted the publishing of only religious books and practical advice to farmers in the Finnish language. It was repealed in 1860. The language prescript of 1863 defined Finnish as an administrative language equal to Swedish in matters concerning the Finnish-speaking population. Following this, the use of Finnish increased in administration and public discussion, and in 1892 Finnish was made an administrative language fully equal to Swedish.[23]

An important milestone for nationalistic members of the intelligentsia was the establishment of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831. The society had a vital role in the nation-building project, and it has had a long-lasting effect on the Finnish language as well as the development of Finnish literature and culture. Elias Lönnrot (1802–1884) made long journeys through eastern Karelia in 1828–1834, collecting ancient epic poetry and ultimately compiling the Finnish national epic, the *Kalevala*. Its first edition (the "Old Kalevala") came out in 1835, and the second, completed edition in 1849.[24] The so-called peasant poets from eastern Finland who wrote *Kalevala*-metric poetry about contemporary topics, political issues, and major events were praised by the intelligentsia.[25]

The intelligentsia supportive of the Finnish language and culture organized into the Fennoman movement. Many Fennoman families changed their home language from Swedish to Finnish, and even translated their surnames. The Svecomanian movement, supporting the Swedish language in Finland and the country's ties with Sweden, was organized during the second half of the 19th century. Strong language tensions arose, particularly among university students, and lasted until the 1930s.[26]

Acquiring Reading and Writing Skills

The literacy rate gradually rose in Finland during the 19th century. However, for the vast majority of the rural population, "literacy" meant only the very basic reading skills required and examined by the Lutheran Church. Church records from the time provide information on the reading skills of the whole population. Records for writing skills, however, are not very reliable and do not cover the entire country. It has been estimated that in the 1830s, 5 percent of the male population was fully literate in reading and writing; by 1880, about 13 percent, and at the turn of the century close to 40 percent of the whole population over 15 years of age possessed both functional reading and writing skills.[27]

The instruction in basic reading skills provided by the Lutheran Church took place in homes and in schools set up in larger farmhouses or vicarages for a few weeks at a time. Reading skills were tested while attending confirmation school, the only compulsory education for the whole population until 1921 when the law on compulsory primary education was enacted. The statute for primary schools was laid down in 1866, but the establishment of primary schools was voluntary, and only a limited number of children in rural areas were able to attend. Itinerant schools operated until the 20th century especially in sparsely settled rural areas in northern and eastern Finland. They were most often organized by local parishes.[28]

Even though the vast majority of the rural population had only very basic reading skills, members of the intelligentsia were concerned about the dangers of their "desire to read" (Leselust), which had been observed by members of the upper classes since the

18th century. Having a “desire to read” largely meant wanting to read for entertainment, especially novels and broadsheets.[29] Concerns about the reading habits of the common people were leading factors in the founding of local parish libraries. They emerged after 1860, and young, nationally minded priests initiated the process.[30]

The great majority of rural people possessed only a few books. The most common were the Bible, the catechism, hymnals, other religious books and practical guides.[31] Local parish libraries made a wider selection of books available to readers in rural areas. Historical novels, fictional stories written by “folk writers,” and the collection of Finnish fairy tales by Eero Salmelainen were among the most read texts in rural parish libraries during the last decades of the 19th century. Especially popular were historical novels written by such Finnish authors as Zachris Topelius, Theodolinda Hahnsson, and Fredrika Runeberg; the novels of Sir Walter Scott were translated into Finnish and also gained a wide readership.[32] Johan Christoph von Schmid’s novel *Genoveva of Brabant, or the Story of the Suffering of an Innocent Lady*, published in several editions, titles, and translations from 1847 onward, was a highly sought after book in Finland.[33]

Folklore Collections and Autobiographical Texts

Basic reading skills were required of all adults. Writing skills, by contrast, were considered by both the educated and lower classes as unnecessary and even dangerous for rural people in the first half of the 19th century. The concern was that superficial “half-education” would estrange the children of peasant families from hard work, religious values, and family traditions.[34] The Fennoman movement promoted the revitalization of the Finnish language and also encouraged people to read and, in contrast to many at the time, to write—to record local oral tradition and write about life stories and contemporary events.

The Finnish Literature Society initiated the collecting and archiving of Finnish folklore. Most folklore collectors were university students and academically trained scholars. In the 1840s, newspapers began to publish requests by the Finnish Literature Society to collect folklore. Julius and Kaarle Krohn established a folklore scholarship and created the “Finnish method” of geographic-historical analysis later in the century. Kaarle Krohn organized the systematic collection of folktales in rural areas, and lay collectors from rural communities were recruited to the effort.[35]

The Finnish Literature Society encouraged the Finnish-speaking rural population to send their manuscripts to the society. Many self-educated writers submitted their fiction, nonfiction, or autobiographic texts hoping that they would be published or at least commented on by the members of the society. These manuscripts have become an

important source for multidisciplinary research in the 21st century, as research into self-educated writers and vernacular literacy has been revived in Finland and the other Nordic countries.[36]

Anna Kuismin has studied the autobiographical writings of people from 19th-century rural Finland. The genres and writing styles of these texts range from *Kalevala*-metric poems to long prose narratives written in the third person singular with images and narrative strategies adopted from literature. Only a few women's autobiographical texts from the 19th century have been preserved, although women were active readers in local libraries and participated in folklore-collecting activities.[37]

Rural Correspondents and Handwritten Newspapers

The first Finnish-language newspaper appeared in 1775–1776. Three Finnish newspapers were founded in the 1820s and 1830s. The first newspaper to gain a large readership among the rural population was *Maamiehen Ystäwä* (Farmer's Friend, 1844–1855), published by J. Karsten in the provincial town Kuopio in eastern Finland. Its first editor-in-chief was J. V. Snellman, a Fennoman philosopher and later a statesman. Among the contributors were priests and some peasants, for example the peasant poet Antti Puhakka from North Karelia. Many self-educated writers stressed the importance of the "Farmers' Friend" in their autobiographies. The newspaper *Suometar* (1847–1866) was founded in Helsinki by a few Fennomanian students. Its audience was educated readers, but Paavo Tikkanen established a network of rural correspondents who served both as local reporters and subscription agents. Many other newspapers copied this scheme in the 1850s and 1860s. Most of the rural correspondents were land-owning farmers; crofters and farm workers were a minority. Antti Manninen (1830–1866), the first editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Tapio* (1861–1888), recruited young women from rural families to participate in the then-current debate on pilfering. Manninen was the son of an innkeeper and held ideas about women's education that were ahead of his time.[38] Manninen and other newspaper editors eagerly revised and commented on letters sent by the rural correspondents. Even texts not considered worth publishing were commented on in the newspaper. Editors encouraged writers to use pen names but reminded them that the writers' real names had to be provided to the editor-in-chief.[39]

Handwritten newspapers became a popular form of writing in rural communities during the late 19th century. They had been common in upper- and middle-class families and in schools for years. University students revitalized them as a means of political discussion at the beginning of the 1850s, when student activism was strictly controlled. The practice of handwritten newspapers was then adopted by such popular movements as enlightenment societies, the agrarian youth movement, and the temperance movement. The first agrarian youth societies were founded by educated sons of peasant families in

Ostrobothnia to support the self-education of rural youth. Handwritten newspapers were most often produced as a single copy and were read aloud at meetings and get-togethers. This provided an opportunity for discussion and even fierce debate on topics such as evolution, temperance, proper behavior, and class relations.[40]

Success Stories and Disappointments

Some of the self-educated writers who began their careers as newspaper correspondents or editors of handwritten newspapers went on to become professional writers or journalists. The rise of Finnish-language literature opened up possibilities for some self-taught writers to enjoy literary careers. Pietari Päivärinta (1827–1913) was born into a smallholder family in Ylivieska, in northwestern Finland. He worked as a farmhand but became a parish clerk. He represented the peasant estate in the 1882–1891 Diet. Päivärinta started as a newspaper correspondent and had his first collection of historical stories published in 1867. The first edition of his autobiography, *Elämäni: Perhe-elämällinen kertomus* (My life: A story of family life; 1877), was published by the Finnish Literature Society, and later editions and most of his later books were published by the Werner Söderström Company, founded in 1878. Päivärinta mostly depicted rural life in northern Finland. His books were very popular among the rural population and were translated into Swedish and other languages.[41]

Yet most self-educated writers could not fully pursue a literary career, and many were discouraged in their pursuits. The new ideals of realism in literature made the writings of self-taught rural writers seem naive and old-fashioned. Aleksis Kivi (1834–1872) was the first professional writer in the Finnish language and is today considered one of Finland's greatest writers. From a modest family background, he was sent to school in Helsinki and studied at university. In his plays and poems and especially in his major work, the novel *Seven Brothers* (published by the Finnish Literature Society in 1870), he combined a realistic and humorous depiction of folk life with images and ideas adopted from world literature, including William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes. *Seven Brothers* is still seen as one of the best novels written in Finnish. It provides a fictional account of the troublesome journey to literacy for seven brothers born into a peasant family. Learning to read is very difficult for them; they run away from the schooling provided by the local parish clerk and live for seven years in a distant forest cabin. They eventually return to society, most of them marry, and they live their lives as dutiful farmers and citizens. The youngest brother, Eero, learns to write and submits correspondence to newspapers. *Seven Brothers* received mixed reviews, while Kivi suffered a period of alcoholism and mental problems and died prematurely.[42]

Another Finnish self-educated writer was Kustaa Brask (1829–1906), an unmarried crofter in Joroinen, southeastern Finland. He sent some 5,700 pages of manuscripts to the Finnish Literature Society, including writings on religion, philosophy, agriculture, education, and history, as well as manuscripts for school textbooks and folklore collections. Earlier in his life Brask had contributed to newspapers, particularly *Tapio*. However, when his contributions grew longer, the editor refused to publish them. Brask sent one of his manuscripts to a commercial publisher and after it was turned down, to

the Finnish Literature Society. He produced a steady stream of manuscripts in the later decades of his life.[43]

Päivärinta and Brask commenced their literary activities at a relatively late age. Kalle Eskola (earlier Kaarlo Sälli) (1865–1938) began his career early but became discouraged. A crofter's son from Jokioinen in southwestern Finland, he was able to complete primary school and dreamed of attending a teachers' training college. Eskola was already contributing to local newspapers at the age of 16. A local property owner became aggravated by his writings and threatened Eskola's father, a tenant of the owner, with eviction. For a while, the adolescent's ink bottle was put under lock and key. In 1882, Eskola was elected as a secretary and librarian, and later chairman, of the agrarian youth society chapter that had been established in Jokioinen. This society was one of the first of its kind. A local clergyman and the parish clerk managed to have the chapter suppressed. Nevertheless, Eskola continued to edit the handwritten newspaper *Nuorison Ystävä* (Friend of youth), mostly by himself. Fragments of this paper have been preserved and were submitted to the Finnish Literature Society in 2009 by his family together with Eskola's diary and other manuscripts. Eskola served in the Russian army in 1887–1890. During that time, his father bought him a small farm. He married a local woman, fathered eleven children, and held many positions of influence in the local community.[44]

Continuities in Finnish Book Culture

Research into the 19th-century writings of peasants and others in the rural population has revealed differences between the Nordic countries. In Sweden, the writers' inner lives or emotions were seldom reflected in peasant diaries or autobiographies. In Finland, the number of peasant diary collections is much smaller, but many of these writers revealed their emotions related to, for instance, the death of a child or an unhappy love affair.[45]

Many old-fashioned means of communication and publishing remained in common use in Finland until well into the 20th century. These include broadsheets, popular until the 1920s, and handwritten newspapers, which had their heyday during the political uprising and russification periods.

The tradition of recruiting lay people for folklore collecting has continued in the gathering of autobiographies, reminiscences, and life-writing by the Finnish Literature Society and several other archives. As a response to open calls, the archives have received vast amounts of material, providing excellent resources for research in various disciplines. One of the most popular calls (in 1969) focused on the lumberjack tradition, producing 18,000 pages of songs, folklore, autobiographical material, and ethnographic depictions from 800 people. Finnish oral history research, which began in the 1980s, has

focused on both written reminiscences and oral interviews, and sometimes a combination of the two.[46]

Many of the cultural organizations and publishing companies founded by Fennomanians in the 19th century are still important actors in Finland today. These include publishing companies Werner Söderström and Gummerus, and the Finnish Literature Society, which now serves as a major literary and folklore archive, library, and research institution, as well as academic and nonfiction publisher. Finnish literature was from the very beginning closely related to the common language and rural life. The gap between book culture "from below" and formal literature is not quite as wide in Finland as it is in countries with longer literary traditions, such as France or England. Aleksis Kivi was fully recognized as a great Finnish writer at the beginning of the 20th century. Today, his dramatic works, poems, and signature novel are widely read and performed.

Finland has faced new challenges as a member of the European Union and of a globalizing world economy in the 21st century. Finns have been frontrunners in the field of information technology, and Finnish primary education has been praised for its continuous excellent results in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) surveys. Nevertheless, the long and often painstaking path to full literacy still seems quite recent in Finland today.

Discussion of the Literature

Most of the research relevant to book culture in Finland has been published in Finnish or in Swedish. The multidisciplinary research on vernacular literacies in Finland and other Nordic countries has been revived recently. This has resulted in several edited collections: *White Field, Black Seeds: Nordic Literacy Practice in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2013), *Vernacular Literacies: Past Present and Future* (2014), and *Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity* (2016).[47] These volumes are based on papers given at the conferences of the Nordic project Reading and Writing from Below: Toward a New Social History of Literacy in the Nordic Sphere during the Long Nineteenth Century, funded by Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences 2011–2014. They include case studies based on Finnish, Nordic, and European materials and methodological discussions on the study and definition of the "book culture from below." Research on 18th-century Finnish book culture is presented in the edited collection *The Emergence of Finnish Book and Reading Culture in the 1700s* (2011).[48]

Many articles on Finnish and Nordic book culture have been published in various journals and collections. Two monographs on Finnish book culture from below have been published in English: Laura Stark's *Limits of Patriarchy* (2013) and Sofia Kotilainen's *Literacy Skills as Local Intangible Capital* (2016).[49] Folklorist Stark utilizes the digitized newspaper collections of the National Library, focusing on the debate on pilfering, gossip,

and gender rights in the Finnish-language press in the 1860s. She also covers the recruitment and training of rural correspondents (including young women) for Finnish-language newspapers. Historian Kotilainen utilizes a comparative methodology with a variety of sources (church records, library documents) in her study of a rural lending library's readers in Central Finland between 1860 and 1920.

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(27.) Anna Kuismin, “From Family Inscriptions to Autobiographical Notes,” in *White Field, Black Seeds*, eds. Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 103; and Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen, “Suomalaisten kirjalliset taidot autonomian kaudella,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 105.4 (2007): 420–443.

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(30.) Mäkinen, *“Nödvändighet af LainaKirjasto,”* 319–341.

(31.) Sofia Kotilainen, *Literacy Skills as Local Intangible Capital: The History of a Rural Lending Library c. 1860–1920*. Studia Fennica Historica 21 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2016), 257–265.

(32.) Kotilainen, *Literacy Skills as Local Intangible Capital*, 210–212; and Tarja-Liisa Luukkanen, *Mitä maalaiskansa luki? Kirjasto, kirjat ja kirjoja lukeva yleisö Karstulassa 1861–1918* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2016), 346–350.

(33.) Kotilainen, *Literacy Skills as Local Intangible Capital*, 208–211; and Luukkanen, Mitä maalaiskansa luki?, 316–318.

(34.) Mäkinen, "The World Will Be Turned Upside Down," 25–39.

(35.) Kati Mikkola, "Self-Taught Collectors of Folklore and Their Challenge to Archival Authority," in *White Field, Black Seeds: Nordic Literacy Practices in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 146–148.

(36.) Two anthologies of the autobiographies and diaries of self-educated writers have been published: Anna Kuismin, *Karheita kertomuksia* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002) and Kaisa Kauranen, *Työtä ja rakkautta* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009).

(37.) Anna Kuismin, "From Family Inscriptions to Autobiographical Notes," in *White Field, Black Seeds*, eds. Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 101–119.

(38.) Laura Stark, *The Limits of Patriarchy: How Female Networks of Pilfering and Gossip Sparked the First Debates on Rural Gender Rights in the 19th-Century Finnish Language Press*, Studia Fennica Ethnologica 13 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 42–49; and Päiviö Tommila, "Yhdestä lehdestä sanomalehdistöksi," in *Suomen lehdistön historia I: Sanomalehdistön vaiheet vuotaan 1905*, ed. Päiviö Tommila (Kuopio, Finland: Kustannuskiila, 1988), 77–265.

(39.) Stark, *The Limits of Patriarchy*, 52–29.

(40.) Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, "Monologic, Dialogic, Collective: The Modes of Writing in Hand-Written Newspapers in 19th- and Early 20th-Century Finland," in *White Field, Black Seeds: Nordic Literacy Practices in the Long Nineteenth Century*, eds. Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 76–88; Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, "Adventurers, Flâneurs, and Agitators: Travel Stories as Means for Marking and Transgressing Boundaries in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Finland," *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 6.2 (2014): 1145–1164; and Jaakko Numminen, *Suomen Nuorisoseuraliikkeen historia, I: Vuodet 1885–1905* (Keuruu, Finland: Otava, 1961), 459–471.

(41.) Pietari Päivärinta's autobiography, *Elämäni: Perhe-elämällinen kertomus* (My life: A story of family life), was published in several editions in the 19th century and as a new edition in 2002 by the Finnish Literature Society.

(42.) Hannes Sihvo, *Elävä Kivi: Aleksis Kivi aikanansa* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2002); and Anna Kuismin, "Building the Nation, Lighting the Torch: Excursions into the Writings of the Common People in Nineteenth-Century Finland," *Journal of Finnish Studies* 16.1 (2012): 9. Aleksis Kivi's *Seven Brothers* has been translated into English several times. The most recent edition is Aleksis Kivi, *Seven Brothers*, translated by R. Impola (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2005). The Finnish Literature Society has produced a database of Aleksis Kivi's life and writings and a digitized corpus of all his literary works.

(43.) Kaisa Kauranen, "Odd Man Out? The Self-Educated Philosopher and His Social Analyses of 19th-Century Finland," in *White Field, Black Seeds*, eds. Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 120–133.

(44.) On Kalle Eskola's life and writings, see Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, "Monologic, Dialogic, Collective," 81–83; Kaisa Kauranen, *Työtä ja rakkautta: Kansanmiesten päiväkirjoja 1834–1937* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), 136–164; Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, "Kansankirjailija ja talonpoikaisylioppilas," in *Historiallinen elämä: Biografia ja historiantutkimus*, eds. Heini Hakosalo, Seija Jalagin, Marianne Junila, and Heidi Kurvinen (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2014), 223–239; and Stark, *The Limits of Patriarchy*, 57. On agrarian youth societies, see Numminen, *Suomen Nuorisoseuraliikkeen historia*.

(45.) Anna Kuismin, "From Family Inscriptions to Autobiographical Notes," in *White Field, Black Seeds*, eds. Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013), 115–116; and Kaisa Kauranen, "Menneisyyden muistiinpanojen kirjo," in *Työtä ja rakkautta*, ed. Kaisa Kauranen (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), 11–14.

(46.) Jyrki Pöysä, *Jätkän synty* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 1997). The special features of Finnish oral history research are discussed in the recent Nordic-Baltic theme issues of the *Oral History Journal*, eds. Anne Heimo, Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen, and Ulla Savolainen; Anne Heimo, "Nordic-Baltic Oral History on the Move," *Oral History Journal* 44.2 (2016): 37–46.

(47.) Anna Kuismin and Matthew Driscoll, eds., *White Field, Black Seeds* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2013); Ann-Catrin Edlund, Lars-Erik Edlund, and Susanne Haugen, eds., *Vernacular Literacies: Past Present and Future* (Umeå, Sweden: Umeå University, 2014); Ann-Catrine Edlund, T. G. Ashplant, and Anna Kuismin, eds., *Reading and Writing from Below: Exploring the Margins of Modernity*, Northern Studies Monographs 4 (Umeå, Sweden: Umeå University and Royal Skyttean Society, 2016).

(48.) Cecilia af Forselles and Tuija Laine, *The Emergence of Finnish Book and Reading Culture in the 1700s* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2011).

(49.) Stark, *The Limits of Patriarchy*; and Sofia Kotilainen, *Literacy Skills as Local Intangible Capital: The History of a Rural Lending Library 1860–1920*, Studia Fennica Historica 21 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2016).

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